

**CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

1. A prompt object used in creating a report to be executed in a reporting system, wherein the report may specify a prompt object as a property of the report, the  
5 prompt object comprising:  
a question to be asked of a user; and  
at least one validation property.
2. The prompt object of claim 1 further comprising a prompt type and  
wherein at least one validation property comprises verification that the answer provided  
10 to the question is of the specified prompt type.
3. The prompt object of claim 1 further comprising a default answer to the question.
4. The prompt object of claim 1 further comprising a meaning that, upon request by a responder to the prompt, provides an explanation of the question.
- 15 5. The prompt object of claim 1 further comprising a reuse value that indicates whether an answer provided from a previous instance of that prompt object, a default value or a new value is to be used for an answer to the question in the prompt object.
6. A method of creating a report to be executed on a reporting system the  
20 method comprising the steps of:  
selecting a template with one or more template properties;

selecting a filter with one or more filter properties; and  
specifying one or more of the template or filter properties with a prompt object;  
wherein the prompt object comprises:

a question to be asked of a user; and

5 at least one validation property.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the prompt object further comprises a  
prompt type and wherein at least one validation property comprises verification that the  
answer provided to the question is of the specified prompt type.

8. The method of claim 6 wherein the prompt object further comprises a  
10 default answer to the question.

9. The method of claim 6 wherein the prompt object further comprises a  
meaning that, upon request by a responder to the prompt, provides an explanation of the  
question.

10. The method of claim 6 wherein the prompt object further comprises a  
15 reuse value that indicates whether an answer provided from a previous instance of that  
prompt object, a default value or a new value is to be used for an answer to the question  
in the prompt object.

11. The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of specifying a single  
prompt object for a plurality of properties in the report and wherein upon report  
20 execution, the question receives only one answer that is provided to a each properties for  
which the prompt object was specified.

12. The method of claim 6 further comprising specifying at most one prompt object for a template or filter property.

13. The method of claim 6 wherein the template comprises a set of templates properties and the filter comprises a set of filter properties and wherein every template  
5 and filter property may be specified as a prompt object.

14. A processor-readable medium comprising code for execution by a processor to create a report to be executed on a reporting system, the medium comprising:

code for causing a processor to enable a user to select a template with one or more template properties;

10 code for causing a processor to enable a user to select a filter with one or more filter properties; and

code for causing a processor to enable a user to specify one or more of the template or filter properties with a prompt object;

wherein the prompt object comprises:

15 a question to be asked of a user; and  
at least one validation property.

15. The medium of claim 14 wherein the prompt object further comprises a prompt type and wherein at least one validation property comprises verification that the answer provided to the question is of the specified prompt type.

20 16. The medium of claim 14 wherein the prompt object further comprises a default answer to the question.

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17. The medium of claim 14 wherein the prompt object further comprises a meaning that, upon request by a responder to the prompt, provides an explanation of the question.

18. The medium of claim 14 wherein the prompt object further comprises a reuse value that indicates whether an answer provided from a previous instance of that prompt object, a default value or a new value is to be used for an answer to the question in the prompt object.

19. The medium of claim 14 further comprising code for enabling a user to specify a single prompt object for a plurality of properties in a report definition object and wherein upon report execution, the question receives only one answer that is provided to a each properties for which the prompt object was specified.

20. The medium of claim 14 wherein the template comprises a set of templates properties and the filter comprises a set of filter properties and further comprising code for causing a processor to enable a user to specify a prompt object for each template and filter property selected.

21. A system for a report to be executed on a reporting system comprising of: report selection means that enable a report creator to define one or more of a template, filter, or properties thereof with a prompt object;

wherein the prompt object comprises:

a question to be asked of a user; and  
at least one validation property.

22. The system of claim 21 wherein the prompt object further comprises a prompt type and wherein at least one validation property comprises verification that the answer provided to the question is of the specified prompt type.

23. The system of claim 21 wherein the prompt object further comprises a  
5 default answer to the question.

24. The system of claim 21 wherein the prompt object further comprises a meaning that, upon request by a responder to the prompt, provides an explanation of the question.

25. The system of claim 21 wherein the prompt object further comprises a  
10 reuse value that indicates whether an answer provided from a previous instance of that prompt object, a default value or a new value is to be used for an answer to the question in the prompt object.

26. The system of claim 21 wherein the report selection means enables a  
15 report creator to specify a single prompt object for a plurality of properties in the report and wherein upon report execution, the question receives only one answer that is provided to a each properties for which the prompt object was specified.

27. The system of claim 21 wherein the report selection means enables a report creator to specify at most one prompt object for a template or filter property.

28. The system of claim 21 wherein the template comprises a set of templates  
20 properties and the filter comprises a set of filter properties and wherein every template and filter property may be specified as a prompt object.